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**Final Reflection**

When starting this class, I must say I was excited and scared to face all my fears of incompetence when it comes to technology. Through the years I have discovered that I am not what you would call a natural when dealing with troubleshooting with any type of multimedia. I would see presentations and websites that other educators constructed and thought I would never be able to have to skills and the imagination to form such intriguing presentations. I was wrong.

Don’t misunderstand me. I am not saying by taking this class that I am an expert, by any means, but it forced me outside of my comfort bubble and in front of a computer for hours. It exposed me to various types of resources that make it easy and fun to construct functional lessons for my students to review material.

After reading through our book and checking out the links with various forms of technology, it made me realize that there is more than I realized. The importance of incorporating this technology within my classroom is vital to the success of my students in education as well as in the real world.

The wiki challenged me to open my eyes to a new format of website. It started out really scaring me that others could make changes to my website or post comments. However, once I was able to grasp how this could really be a living breathing part of my classroom that changed as time went on, I got really excited. The actual construction of the wiki was simpler than expected, and it definitely got easier and easier with practice.

Next, I took on the life map. This was harder for me. It was just a matter of getting used to how to manipulate the software to reflect what was pictured in my head. I loved the wide variety of shapes and colors. I am a big fan of color coding, so this was right up my alley. There is something about concept mapping that reaches so many more students. I used this software in my classroom when working on writing process for an essay. For visual learners like myself, this is an incredible tool. I noticed that my students were more willing to work on prewriting when they could use this software.

I admit that I don’t prioritize file management as much as I should. However, since I was forced to look at my organization on my computer, I noticed something. It looked just like my real file cabinet, with things stuffed everywhere with no efficient way of finding anything. How could I find anything before? I also noticed that I was overwhelmed by my desktop most of the time. I probably used about three shortcuts that were on my desktop. So, when I deleted the unused icons, I got the same sensation that comes with clearing off my desk. Ah, that’s better, now I can work. I was also able to form unit files so that all the worksheets for one unit were all together. That has already saved me so much time, and I can also see my options more clearly, instead of going with whatever I could find at the moment.

The pathfinder was a foreign concept to me. Yes, I knew there were a variety of sources online that shouldn’t be trusted, but I had no idea how to single those sources out. I learned how to discover a site’s owner and origin. I also learned how to construct a defined and developed way to guide my students in the right direction. Instead of just telling them bad sites to avoid, I now give them lists and descriptions of where they can find sites that will give them accurate and intriguing information. Also, learning how to search correctly and efficiently will help my class sessions be more focused and less trial and error.

The copyright information was something that took me by surprise. Not only did I learn more about the copyright laws, but I learned that I hadn’t been adhering to them very well. This was scary for me and my students as well. I want to teach them how to use sources properly and giving credit where it is due, and now I feel confident in doing just that.

Then, came the multimedia module. This was my first experience of being truly lost. It was overwhelming to start with that I saw things that I didn’t even know existed. I knew podcasts and digital stories existed, but had no clue what exactly they were. As I began, I was very confident that once I figured out what these were, they probably would have no function in my classroom. Again, I was wrong. I found several uses for the podcasts within my poetry unit. Also, the digital storytelling will help me recount memorable experiences in my professional and personal life.

When conquering Microsoft Office in a new way. To say I was resistant is an understatement. I have a huge fear of excel. I know this fear is irrational, but nevertheless I have it. My best friends at school are Math teachers, and I watch them open and close their workbooks formulating everything to calculate on cue, and I am terrified. I wouldn’t say that I took on this module bravely, but rather I tried to avoid it and make it go away. I finally was able to form the workbooks I needed and like anything else, it is less scary after you go ahead and begin. I just needed some time to get to know Excel. After some time together, I think we have become friends. I am still working with the toolbars and formulas, but overall I am miles from where I began.

I really enjoyed the internet tools module. I was exposed to so many different types of resources! It was like Christmas morning for a teacher! Templates for worksheets, puzzlemakers, word searches, and all these free within my grasp. This is a tool that I used immediately in the classroom for the next week’s assignments. Instead of a boring study guide, we had a crossword puzzle with the same content. More students completed the assignment, and I think it was much less intimidating for them. It is so important to give the students a variety of ways to demonstrate their skills or they become bored and stop trying as hard.

Interactive Whiteboard lessons are hard! Alright, so once you know what you are doing, they aren’t so bad. However, this was my most challenging part of the class ,hands down. I have had little experience with interactive whiteboards. I have seen lots of presentations and seen people use them in classrooms, but as far as me working one, never. I worked for days and days trying to download the correct software. After experiencing problems with my home computer, I tried at school, only to be met with nasty security messages blocking my downloads. So, once again I went home to start over. This only resulted in my desktop freezing completely. I commandeered my friend’s computer at her home, and camped out until it was done. I don’t think my lesson is the most intriguing or most creative lesson I could come up with, but I conquered the beast. The most important thing to learn in every area of life is to never give up, and I didn’t.

All in all, this class has opened my eyes to several things. I know about media out there that can aide me in guiding students through information in an engaging and exciting way. I know more about my computer systems at home and work, and what they are capable of. I know that fearing certain software can cause you to miss out on an amazing tool. And most of all, I learned it doesn’t work the first, second, third, or fourth time, it doesn’t mean that it won’t work eventually. Also, it is worth all the time spent to receive the final result.